



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 25

February, 2010

New Law Makes Absentee Voting Easier for Overseas Americans

This newsletter is published by the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Inside this issue:

New ID Requirements to Enter Mexico from Mar.1	2
Travel Warnings and Alerts	2
Customs & Border Protection Global Entry Program	3
Visa Waiver Program Changes	3
Security Delays for U.S. Flights	4
Leaving the Consular District?	4
Two Warnings on Internet Scams	5
Complete Passport Application Online	6

On October 28, 2009, Congress enacted the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. This legislation amends existing law regarding overseas voting in federal elections, and should make voting easier for overseas Americans.

New Procedures for 2010 Elections

Beginning with the November 2010 general election, and for all subsequent general, special, and primary elections, states will be required to mail out ballots at least 45 days prior to an election for a federal office. This requirement may cause some states to select earlier primary dates in order to comply with the 45-day mailing deadline, or to request waivers due to special circumstances.

In addition to mailing ballots to overseas voters, the states will be required, at the voter's request, to provide registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and blank ballots via fax or email. However, each state's laws determine whether ballot requests or voted ballots can be returned via fax or email. The new law prohibits states from rejecting marked ballots based

on notarization, paper size, or paper-weight requirements. The witnessing requirements of individual states remain in place.

Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests

Effective immediately, states will no longer be required by federal law to continue to mail election materials to overseas addresses (even when they are determined to be invalid) for two complete general election cycles on the basis of a single ballot request. It will now be up to each state to determine how long to continue to send out election materials before requiring overseas voters to submit new ballot requests. This change, sought by local election officials, should greatly decrease the volume of voting materials sent abroad to addresses where Americans no longer reside.

State Department Recommendations

In light of these changes, the Department of State recommends that all U.S. voters

(Continued on Page 5)

It's That Time of Year Again...

Special points of interest:

- * Replacing a Lost or Stolen Passport
- * U.S. Government Pandemic Policy for Americans Abroad
- * Act Now to Vote in the 2010 Midterm Elections
- * Q: How much of my domestic helper's pay may I deduct from my taxes?

Tax season is quickly approaching. Our upcoming IRS workshops and one-on-one appointments on March 2nd and 3rd have filled up quickly and we look forward to seeing many of you there. If you were

not able to sign up for this event, please keep in mind that there is a wealth of information about paying taxes available at www.irs.gov. For information specific to U.S. citizens and

Resident Aliens filing taxes from overseas, visit <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html>.

New ID Requirements for US Citizens and LPRs Entering Mexico from March 1

Effective March 1, 2010, the Government of Mexico has established new identification requirements for U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents entering Mexico.

1. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by air, land or sea will be required to present a **valid passport or "US Passport Card"** to prove their identity.
1. Lawful permanent residents in the United States of America entering Mexico by air, land or sea will be required to present one of the following valid documents to prove their identity:

- **Form I-551 (Alien Registration Card)**, or
- Expired **Form I-1551 (Alien Registration Card)** together with **Form I-797 (Notice of Approval)**, or
- **Immigration Visa issued by the United States of America**, or



- **Form I-327 (Permit to Reenter)**, or
- **Transportation Letter**, or
- **Alien Documentation, Identification & Telecommunications System (ADIT) stamp on the passport or Form I-94**, or
- **Form I-571 (Refugee Travel Document)**.

These requirements are designed to improve regional security in North America and will offer increased legal certainty to those U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents traveling to Mexico.

Security Situation - Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is prudent for you and your family to review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Haiti</u>	02/22/2010
<u>Saudi Arabia</u>	02/18/2010

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

<u>Mexico - Security</u>	02/22/2010
<u>India - Security Issues</u>	01/29/2010
<u>Philippines</u>	01/20/2010

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The Department of State recently issued a Warden Message concerning indiscriminate corrosive fluid attacks in Hong Kong. The attacks have taken place in the busy outdoor shopping areas of Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei. For details, please visit the following website:

http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/acs_wm2010011501.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit "Americans Traveling Abroad" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

You may also visit the Consular Affairs twitter page at <http://twitter.com/TravelGov>.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Global Entry Program

Global Entry is a pilot program managed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection that allows pre-approved, low-risk travelers expedited clearance upon arrival into the United States. Although this program is intended for frequent travelers who make several international trips per year, there is no minimum number of trips an applicant must make in order to qualify. Participants may enter the United States by utilizing automated kiosks located at airports such as Washington Dulles (IAD), Los Angeles International

(LAX), John F. Kennedy (JFK), Honolulu International (HNL), and many more. Currently, 20 airports are participating in Global Entry.

The process requires participants to present their machine-readable U.S. passport or permanent resident card, submit their fingerprints for biometric verification, and make a customs declaration at the kiosks touch-screen. Upon successful completion of the Global Entry process at the kiosk, the

traveler is issued a transaction receipt and directed to baggage claim and the exit, unless chosen for a selective or random secondary referral.

Additional information, including how to enroll, is available from the Department of Homeland Security at the following website:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted_traveler/global_entry/

Visa Waiver Program Changes

As many of you will be aware, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) came into effect on 12 January 2009. From 20 January 2010, it will be mandatory for all passengers travelling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to apply for an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), 72 hours prior to departure. Passengers will not be accepted for travel to the US if they do not have a valid ESTA. This also applies to passengers in transit to a third country.

Travelers should log onto the ESTA website at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> and complete the online application form. The US Department of Homeland Security recommends that applications be submitted no less than 72 hours prior to travel.

If details on an approved ESTA are not exactly the same as the details in the traveler's passport, the two data sets cannot be reconciled and U.S. authorities will deem that the passenger does not have a valid ESTA. They

will need to reapply.

For further information, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions regarding ESTA available on their website: <http://www.cbp.gov/ESTA/>



Replacing a Lost or Stolen Passport

If your passport was lost or stolen during this holiday season, please follow the procedures to apply for a replacement passport:

- 1) Obtain a lost passport report from your local Chinese Entry/Exit Bureau (EEB). (In Shanghai, it's located at 1500 Min Sheng Road, Pudong, Shanghai, Tel: (86-21) 2895-1900, press 2 for the operator). This report is necessary to ensure your smooth departure from China after we issue a new passport.
- 2) Come to our office to submit a passport application form (DS-11), affidavit (DS-64), proof of your Identity (ex: a copy of the lost/stolen US passport, your US drivers license, U.S. state ID and/or Military ID), and two 2" X 2" (5 cm X 5 cm) photos. We also need to see your EEB lost/stolen passport report. The fee for a replacement passport is U.S. \$100.00 for adults and \$85.00 for children (or RMB equivalent), cash or credit card.
- 3) Take your new passport and the EEB lost/stolen passport report back to the EEB to obtain a new Chinese visa.

**For applicants under age 16, both parents should also come to the Consulate, or one parent may apply with the notarized written consent of the other.

U.S. Government Pandemic Policy for Americans Abroad

The U.S. Government remains concerned about the possibility of a severe influenza pandemic resulting from changes in the 2009-H1N1 virus or emergence of an even newer influenza virus that may affect Americans abroad. This fact sheet offers information on measures Americans can take

to prepare for and cope with a severe pandemic. It also includes information on the U. S. Government's efforts to plan for and respond to such an event. The entire fact sheet is available here:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html



Security Delays for U.S. Flights

Flights arriving to and departing from the United States may experience delays due to increased security measures.

Passengers should plan to arrive early at airports overseas and in the U.S. For more information on these increased security measures, please

see the Transportation Security Administration's website: http://www.tsa.gov/press/happenings/dec25_guidance.shtm

Act Now To Vote In The 2010 Midterm Elections



Another federal election year is about to begin. Every seat in the House of Representatives and at least 36 Senate seats will be contested this year. Overseas voter participation this year could determine the outcome of many elections. Make sure you take part!

New regulations are in effect for 2010. All overseas voters must re-file the official registration/ballot request form. Go to www.overseasvotefoundation.org to register and request your ballot today or visit the U.S. Consulate General Shanghai to register and request your ballot. You will also find helpful voter services at this site.

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district after a long stay here and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. Consulate, please do not forget to cancel your registration when you leave. You can unregister yourself by visiting the travelregistration.state.gov site if you were previously registered through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form to the U.S. consulate, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.



Two Warnings On Internet Scams

FBI issues warning on Internet Scams following Haiti earthquake

The FBI reminds Internet users who receive appeals to donate money in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti to apply a critical eye and do their due diligence before responding to those requests. Past tragedies and natural disasters have prompted individuals with criminal intent to solicit contributions purportedly for a charitable organization and/or a good cause. Information on Internet scams is available at the

following link: <http://www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/escams.htm>

Internet pal in trouble?

The Department of State encourages all American citizens to be vigilant against the potential for e-mail financial scams. To learn more about the warning signs for such scams, please see our financial scams information page at: http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_3155.html or watch the YouTube video

entitled "Scamnet: Lonely Hearts Scam Division?". The video may be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqEENj-OKPQ>



New Law Makes Absentee Voting Easier for Overseas Americans

(From Page 1)

residing abroad request absentee ballots from their local election officials at the start of each calendar year, and whenever there is a change of address, change of e-mail address, or change of name, by completing and sending in a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA.) To locate information on your specific state's requirements, and to obtain an on-line version of the FPCA, please visit www.fvap.org. FPCAs may be mailed to your local voting officials in the United States via international mail or from any U.S. embassy or consulate. Many states allow U.S. citizens overseas to submit the FPCA by e-mail or fax.

The Department of State strongly encourages all U.S. overseas voters to provide e-mail addresses or fax numbers on their FPCAs to enable local election officials to transmit election materials in the fastest manner available, which should then allow sufficient time for the return of voted ballots. For information regarding your specific state, please visit www.fvap.org.

Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for the November general elections for federal offices, although some states also permit its use for elections for state and local offices. Beginning in January 2011, the new law allows use of the FWAB for primary, special, and runoff elections for federal offices. Voters who request an absentee ballot in advance of their state's ballot request deadline, but who fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials in time to vote, should complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot and send it back to local election officials in time for it to be counted. An on-line version of the FWAB, together with instructions for its use, is available at www.fvap.gov.

Shanghai Consulate
News for Americans

U.S. Consulate General,
Shanghai, China
1038 West Nanjing
Road, Westgate Mall, 8th
Floor

Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650

Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours
Emergencies:

(86-21) 6433-3936

Open 8:00am - 11:30am
and 1:30pm - 3:30pm
Monday to Friday.

*Closed on Tuesday
afternoons, weekends
and holidays.

<http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

Someone Asked the Consul:

How much of my domestic helper's pay may I deduct from my taxes?

The answer will depend upon what percentage of your domestic helper's time is spent on child care versus other household work. To claim the credit for child and dependent care expenses, you must file Form 1040 or Form 1040A (or Form 1040NR), not Form 1040EZ (or Form 1040NR-EZ), and meet all the necessary requirements. For more information, see the following link to IRS Publication 5030: http://www.irs.gov/publications/p503/ar02.html#en_US_publication100049002.

Want Faster Service? Fill out Passport Application Online BEFORE Coming to the Consulate

The Shanghai ACS Section strongly encourages all applicants to use electronic application forms for all passport services, including passport renewals and adding visa pages (Forms DS-11, DS-82, DS-5504 and DS-4085). After completing your application online, print the application and bring it to your appointment.

Failure to complete these applications online will delay the processing of your application, and in-

crease your wait-time.

You can access the required forms at the ACS website http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/passport_forms.html or http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/forms_847.html.

Note: For applicants without social security numbers (ex: newborn babies), enter 000-00-0000 as the SSN on the online form.

If your passport is lost or

stolen, you can print out a Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport (DS-64). And if you are applying for a minor's passport and both parents cannot sign the application together, you can print out a Statement of Consent (DS-3053). These special forms do not need to be filled out online.

